

Town of Brookline  
Advisory Committee Minutes

Harry K. Bohrs, Chair

February 27, 2014

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Present: Harry K. Bohrs, Carla Benka,, Clifford M. Brown, Lea Cohen, John Doggett, Bernard Greene, Kelly A. Hardebeck, Amy F. Hummel, Systke Humphrey, Alisa G. Jonas, Janice S. Kahn, Bobbie Knable, Fred Levitan, Pamela Lodish, Sean M. Lynn-Jones, Shaari S. Mittel, Lee L. Selwyn, Stanley L. Spiegel, Charles Swartz, Leonard A. Weiss, Karen Wenc, Christine Westphal

Absent: Sumner J. Chertok, Nancy S. Heller, Angela Hyatt, Michael Sandman

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The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM.

Present in addition to the Advisory Committee members:

Stephen Cirillo, Finance Director, Town of Brookline

Gary McCabe, Chief Assessor, Town of Brookline

Mike Dippier, Comptroller, Town of Brookline

**1. Agenda Item: Finance Department Budget Review**

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Presenting for the A&F subcommittee is: Harry Bohrs

Stephen Cirillo: Reserves and practices are good in the finances of the town.

Solid reserves, good financial policies driven by the 6<sup>th</sup> floor. Aggressive plans to take care of unfunded liabilities. Doesn't mean there's enough money for all the wants and needs. But we have excellent financial controls.

Finance Department is going down by 1.3 %, and the greatest savings came from the payroll conversion.

Finance Department had a rough year with both payroll conversion and upgrade in assessing software, with a lot of work, including people working many weekends. Payroll is now functioning and creating savings, as anticipated, and still has final tweaking to do but it's working well.

Comment: Compensating balances do not appear in the budget, and can be misleading in terms of budget.

Comment: HR has asked for an additional clerical support position, but it's not for payroll system; it's an offshoot to the growth in school which town staff needs for benefit administration, health insurance, workmen's comp, processing, etc.

Update on the Pilot Program? Going well. \$625,000 this year. A new pilot this year is Newbury College. They are phasing up to 25% over 17 years, to add \$90,000 per year. And in early fall 2014, Steve will have to re-negotiate with BU. He expects it will be renewed, but it does take time.

Comment: We do use some non-profit/schools' athletic facilities, and is that rolled into the Pilot? Yes, it is.

Gary McCabe: The BU agreement is a very good agreement, and it took 10 years to put it together. They acquired a property that was not taxable and got brought into BU and therefore added into the Pilot.

How many institutions are NOT coming up to the table? Can't say completely, but there are 16 paying pilots, 2 religious, 3 colleges, and others. Not included: Secondary schools (Park, Dexter, Brimmer & May, St. Mary's, and Maimonides).

Saving \$50,000 by bringing payroll back in house. Difficult because school system and town payroll system are completely different (decentralized v. centralized). They had to reconcile all of these, multiple data sources, and it took great effort.

Mike Dipietro: MUNIS offers a backup disaster recovery system for our data. In Maine. As of July 1<sup>st</sup>, we'll go online with that. \$25,000 annually.

There's a threshold for \$5,000 in tangible personal taxable property (businesses in homes) that is an exemption. The revenue was very small and the administrative cost was very high. Town meeting voted this exemption.

Re-assessment of property is in 2015. A full re-evaluation, every 3 years.

Border properties: Even if only partially in Brookline, they get the full residential exemption. Exemption goes to the town where you file your income taxes.

Gas at \$3.17 / Diesel at \$3.20. When rebid, they expect it will go up 10 cents or more.

Next is town's liability with regard to unused vacation.

Pensions still due to be fully funded by 2030

**Vote:** Upon motion duly noted and seconded, the committee voted in regard to the Subcommittee's recommendation on the FY 15 Finance Budget of \$2,845,778:

To approve 19 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstained.

## **2. Agenda Item: Debt & Interest Budget Review**

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Presenting for the subcommittee is: Harry Bohrs

Steve Cirillo:

Overall debt service budget is \$9.6 million

Town has adopted an aggressive approach to handle unfunded liabilities.

7.75% rate of return on pensions with plan to be fully funded in 2030.

Fund manager changed to Russell; with a saving of \$700,000 annually.

OPEBS: Aggressive plan in place, and Steve compliments the OPEB committee and members of BOS, particularly Dick Benka, who carried this issue forward. Now \$21,000,000 in our funds. Goal is to get to the ARC as soon as possible. Our ARC is \$5.2 million.

**Vote:** Upon motion duly noted and seconded, the committee voted in regard to the Subcommittee's recommendation on the FY 15 Debt and Interest Budget of \$9,621,757:

To approve 19 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstained.

## **3. Agenda Item: Unclassified Budget Review**

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Presenting for the subcommittee is: Harry Bohrs

In the future, we may need to add insurance for fraud, relative to computers/ hacking.

Also insurance for credit card coverage.

Question: Shouldn't the Finance Committee review the policies, and not just rubber stamp them? We are defined to be the Finance Committee, by statute, and shouldn't we carry out this role?

Credit Card Usage:

Property tax / Parking tickets: We pay a convenience fee to the user.

We absorb the fees everywhere else, although it gets included in the cost to all town users.

They are looking into insurance needs and costs.

## **4. Motion to adjourn, unanimous.**

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The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 PM.